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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

FIGURE PAINTING IN WATER COLOR.

BY EMMA HAYWOOD.

FIGURE PAINTING is the most ambitious of all studies, and must not be attempted without first devoting considerable time and energy to the cultivation of correctness and facility in drawing. In the first place outline sketches should be made from the cast of heads, hands and feet, and afterwards from the entire figure; these outlines should be taken from well known classical subjects, acknowledged to be of the highest order of merit. If a really serious course of training is contemplated, the study of artistic anatomy will be of the greatest possible service, for a knowledge of certain laws governing the action of the human body will unconsciously guide our pencil when in the act of portraying that expression which alone gives life to a picture. Oftentimes the alteration of the play of the muscles under certain conditions is of so subtle a nature that we should fail to recognize it without the aid of science, and although we might attain without this aid, the power of conveying a good general idea of the form before us, our work would lack the vitality that stamps the efforts of a skilled artist.

Furthermore, I would impress on my readers the advisability of studying from the nude first from the cast, and afterwards, if possible, from life, because unless students are well acquainted with the just proportions of the human frame, they are more than likely to render themselves ridiculous when endeavoring to represent a figure concealed by drapery of any kind, for it must never be forgotten that the lines of the figure must be suggested by the lines of the drapery, whether it be ample or scanty. To this end it is well to simplify as much as possible the drawing of drapery, since its chief use is to give expression to the form beneath.

With regard to the use of color, the best preparation is to make some studies from still life before starting on figure painting. Some useful hints for setting about such studies have been already given in the two latest numbers of this journal. Fruit subjects will, perhaps, be found more especially useful on account of their solidity, and because they enforce greater accuracy of drawing than floral subjects; they also give reflected lights with much more clearness.

I, of course, take it for granted that a course of study in outline from the figure has been supplemented by practice in shading in black and white. This is essentially necessary, inasmuch as it is very difficult for a beginner to discern the gradations of light and shade in combination with color, unless they have a basis to work upon.

If you have faithfully made some such preparation as is suggested by my opening remarks, you may approach figure painting with great pleasure and profit, and although it is an excellent plan and a great help to copy the works of good masters when opportunity offers, by all means make use of living models at once; be not discouraged if your first attempts are failures, for is it not a well known fact that we often learn most in producing what proves to be a failure after all, for such failures show us already what to avoid in the future. Do not fall into the error of trying to make pictures to begin with; be content to make studies only at first. Always preserve these, however apparently worthless and disheartening in their results, for by comparing them from time to time as they accumulate you will be able to judge of the progress you are making, and I am very sure that if you are in earnest you will find such comparisons encouraging. The best model to choose for a start is one with very distinct characteristics. A student, especially a lady student, is apt to look for something pretty; now prettiness means softness of outline, tender coloring, subtleties of light and shade. All these tend to enhance your difficulties, and detract, rather than add, to the usefulness of your early studies.

A strong, rugged face, wrinkled with age, gives you the best chance for a beginning; here you have something to take hold of, and can easily detect, and therefore correct faults in drawing; moreover, an aged face gives you in outline the actual formation of the bones beneath the surface of muscle and skin; these are so lost in the roundness of youth that they are felt rather than seen and can therefore only be indicated. Pose your model so as to get as much breadth of light and shade as possible. The best studio light for this purpose is obtained from a high side light, rather than a top light; which is generally too diffused and casts such deep shadows under the hollows of the eyes that you lose much of the effect of the eyes themselves, also a strong top light gives too much half tone about the face generally. The simplest studies are obtainable from the broadest effects which will certainly also give the most satisfactory results.

Now take plenty of time to pose your model, be especially careful not to allow the pose to be in any way forced, not only is it likely to be stiff in such a case but it would also be difficult for the sitter to keep, a contingency to be carefully avoided. As a rule a model will fall into a natural pose much more artistic



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than anything you can suggest; all you have to do is to propose a motive and then allow the sitter to give his own interpretation of it, if this does not please you supply a new motive, continue this line of action until some attitude or unexpected turn of the head appeals to your artistic sense sufficiently to make you anxious to at once commence work.

Have ready some good water color paper specially made for the purpose and nicely stretched according to previous directions, place your easel a distance at least three times the height of the sitter away from him; for a study of the head only, you may come nearer, but for the entire figure unless you are at a sufficient distance the proportions will become distorted to your vision, and it will be impossible to make a good drawing. The sitter should be placed on a platform raised about eighteen inches from the ground.

Take a piece of charcoal cut to a sharp edge, and roughly sketch in the general outlines, do not trouble about detail until you get the proportions and action of the subject fairly accurate; then proceed to correct in detail, but only give yourself a very sketchy idea of the folds of the drapery, using those lines chiefly that directly give the form of the figure beneath. The reason for this is obvious; when your model rests, all the folds of the drapery will be displaced and more or less altered when the pose is resumed. Professional models usually expect to rest ten minutes in each hour, children more often.

When your drawing is satisfactory, go over all the outlines with a lead pencil, an H. B. is the best, it is not advisable to use a harder pencil; let your lines be fine but clear. Next beat out the charcoal with a clean soft rag, and all is ready for painting.

It is advisable to begin by floating in a background; and here let me remark that beginners should never attempt to change or try to improve on what they see before them. If they do, it will surely end in disaster. The background should be chosen with a view to setting off the coloring of the model to the very best advantage and should in all cases be as unobtrusive as possible. But whatever the color or texture may be, it must be copied as faithfully as possible, at the same time pay careful attention to relative tones. If the head shows dark on the background, be sure that you reproduce the same effect in your work, do not be satisfied with any half measures, study well the gradations of light and shade, and make up your mind to keep them rightly balanced; the true artistic merit of a painting depends more on the proper distribution of light and shade than it does on actual coloring.

Mix a tint as near the general tone of the background as possible, be sure you mix enough to cover the surface required, work with a full brush constantly replenished, so that the brush marks may not be visible when dry. Commence at the top and carry the color quickly across from side to side, you can, of course, change, deepen or lighten, the color at pleasure as you go along according to the necessities of the case, provided that you have previously prepared all the tints you need.

When this first layer of color is thoroughly dry it can be strengthened where necessary and inequalities filled in. If too dark in any part, then pass a wet brush dipped in clean water over the places you wish to lighten, and afterwards press a clean piece of blotting paper on them, this process can be repeated until you obtain the wished for tint, sometimes the wet brush alone will answer the purpose and remove the superfluous color.

It is now time to block in the features, lay in the principal shadows with care and precision; paint the hair in masses of light and shade, put in the markings of the eyes, nostrils, ears and lips. Aim at strong effect in the beginning and pay no sort of attention to anything like finish, endeavor to improve the drawing with every stroke of the brush.

While this preliminary work is being allowed to dry, put in the drapery broadly and get rid of the white paper generally before returning to the face. Try always to keep your highest lights pure, and strike your darkest tones as early as possible, so that you may have a key to work by. This

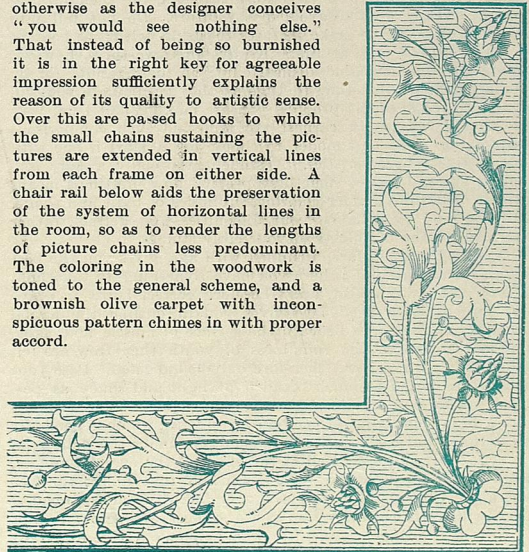
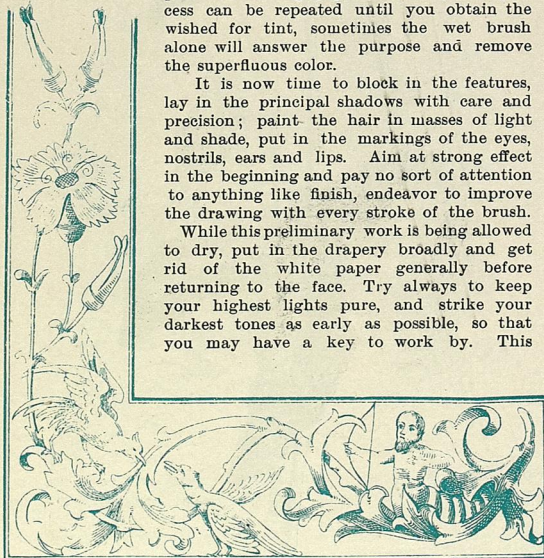
done, you can return to the face and retouch until the modeling in light and shade satisfies you; then with a very clean brush you can put on the delicate flesh tints freely, using them pure but properly diluted, mingling them while wet, passing over the shadows with a light hand so as not to disturb the underlying color. Some persons advocate the laying in of a flat light wash of flesh color to begin with over the whole face, but I disapprove of this plan as it is apt not only to seriously damage the high lights, but to lead to a sameness of coloring that imparts a flat, tame appearance to the painting greatly to be deprecated.

Never hesitate to eradicate any mistakes or errors you may fall into, do this either with blotting paper or a wet brush and then, when dry, fill in and alter at pleasure. When the work approaches completion, you can use a sharp penknife with great effect to heighten or recover a light, or take out a little color where it is too heavy. Never work too long on one part of the picture but gradually bring it all on together; pay constant attention to the drawing and leave so-called finish to take care of itself.

With regard to the colors you should use, it is impossible to set an arbitrary palette, but for flesh painting I may say that with the following colors an excellent effect can be obtained, after a while the student can experiment for himself:—Raw Umber, Ivory, or Blue-Black, Raw Sienna, Yellow Ochre, Terra Verte, Cobalt Blue, Scarlet Vermilion, Rose Madder, and Lemon Yellow.

I would strongly advise making a sketch of more than one view of the same pose. It is also a good plan to make a study of the head alone in addition to drawings of the whole figure. To become thoroughly conversant with a face is a great help not only for the work in hand, but for future work; as the experience thus gained is invaluable, nor will this method if followed be found irksome, for the greater the facility gained in execution the more fascinating the pursuit of art becomes, and the more absorbing its influence. Persevere then, my readers, and I promise you that your patient efforts will more than repay you in the end.

WITH simple elements of decoration an architect has recently fitted up an entrance and waiting room which is equally pleasing to lay visitors and members of his profession. The walls affording some display of water-colors and works in black and white, are covered with wall paper in imitation of a brocaded fabric. This hanging with its design of foliage in brown, and with shaded, thickly clustered leaves forming an effect of relief on a gold repped background is highly decorative. The frieze of ten or twelve inches depth shows lighter tints figured in a conventionalized design of the Lily of France, on a ground of cream or pale chocolate. The ceiling takes the latter color with molding in wood of greenish olive tint between the two sections forming a slight cove. The gold picture molding marking the division between frieze and lower wall is lacquered down to take away the metallic lustre since otherwise as the designer conceives "you would see nothing else." That instead of being so burnished it is in the right key for agreeable impression sufficiently explains the reason of its quality to artistic sense. Over this are passed hooks to which the small chains sustaining the pictures are extended in vertical lines from each frame on either side. A chair rail below aids the preservation of the system of horizontal lines in the room, so as to render the lengths of picture chains less predominant. The coloring in the woodwork is toned to the general scheme, and a brownish olive carpet with inconspicuous pattern chimes in with proper accord.



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